Proposal for a separate human rights department

1184. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item reported in the Ahmedabad based Times of India of 17th December, 1998 under the caption, 'Why a Separate Human Rights Department';

(b) if so, the facts and the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are planning to convene a conference of the Education Ministers of states to arrive at a consensus; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Restructuring of undergraduate courses

1185. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Kothari Commission had pointed out in 1996 that our undergraduate degree is not treated as equivalent to an undergraduate degree in other countries; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken, if any, for restructuring of undergraduate courses with coordination between the CBSE and the University of Delhi?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Preservation of Literature and Monuments of Assam

1186. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) what measures Government have taken to preserve the old books on literature and religion at Majuli Island and to preserve the monuments of Aham Kingdom in Sibsagar and Jorhat districts of Assam;

(b) whether Government have any plans to preserve Kaspur monuranets of Kachari Kingdom in Kachar district of the State; and

(c) what other measures have been taken for preservation of ancient monuments by the Archaeological Department of Government of India?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Growing Illiteracy in the Country

1187. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RE SOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India will be the most illiterate country in 2000;

(b) which are the Major areas of the country still having least literacy rate; and

(c) what are the major reasons for illiteracy still growing even after Government's various literacy programmes?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) As per the 1991 census the literacy rate in the country was 52.21% and the number of illiterates in the country was 32.88 crores against a total population of 84.63 crores. The figures relating to subsequent increase in the number of illiterates in the country will be known only after the results of 2001 Census is

published. However, as per the National Sample Survey Organisation, which has recently released the figures of its 53rd round, the literacy rate at the end of 1997 was 62% and the projected number of illiterates was 29.44 crores agaisnt a total projected population of 95.30 crores.

As per the 53rd Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation the States/ UTs where the literacy rates are below the projected national average of 62% are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, -Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Dedra and Nagar Haveli.

The latest projections indicate that the illiteracy in the country is steadily de-creasing. However, the reasons for the slow progress of literacy in the above states are, inter alia, large number of illiterates, dearth of committed volunteers, lack of literacy tradition movements, widening gender bias against women, diverse socio cultural factors, etc.

Dismal State of Basic Education

1188. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DE-VELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of a very dismal picture of the basic edcua-tion as projected through a public report which appeared in the Times of India dated 3rd January, 1999;

(b) whether Government haves analysed the said public report; if so, the details of such analysis; and

(c) whether Government propsoe to make education a fundamental right; if so, by when and what steps Government have taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RE-SOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) The news-item refers to excerpts from the Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE) prepared by an independent group of researchers and released in January, 1999.

Government is generally aware of the contents of the report. The preliminary response of the Department to issue referred to in the news-items is as follows:—

(i) A positive change is discernible in the attitude of parents towards their children's education.

(ii) Though all State Government have exempted children from payment of tuition fees upto upper primary level, parents are required to meet other costs of schooling of children. These are sought to be mitigated by provision of scholarships and incentives such as free textbooks, uniforms, Midday Meals, etc.

(iii) Several socio-economic and cultural reasons have been cited as reasons for non-attend-ence of primary school by out of shcool children. These include involvement of children in domestic chores, agricultural work and other activities.

(c) The Constitution (Eighty-Third Amendment) Bill, 1997 to make right to free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years a Fundamental Right has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha on July 28, 1997.

Central Schools in the Country

1189. PROF. RAM BAKHSH SINGH VERMA: SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RE-SOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Central schools ap-proved to be opened in the country during last three years, giving State-wise details thereof;